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John Townshend is Professor and chair of the Department of Geography at the University of Maryland, where he is also a member of its Institute for Advanced Computing Studies. His research interests are primarily in the rates and causes of land cover change. He is currently a member of the MODIS Science Team and is principal investigator for the Global Land Cover Facility. He chairs the Science and Technical Board of GOFC/GOLD (Global Observations of Forest Cover/Global Landcover Dynamics), one of the panels of GTOS and also the North American Advisory Board of UNEP's Division of early Warning and Assessment. He received his Ph. D. from University College London.